



# 50-STATE REVIEW

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## Teacher License Reciprocity

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Research has long shown that, of the school-based factors impacting student achievement, teachers have the greatest level of influence.<sup>1</sup> To ensure teachers have the knowledge, skills and training needed to deliver quality instruction, states have established requirements for teacher preparation and licensing, which often include: earning a bachelor's degree; completing relevant coursework through a traditional or alternative preparation program; demonstrating ability in the classroom through student teaching; and passing basic skills, content, pedagogy and/or performance assessments.

... the route to licensure varies from one state to the next. Teachers considered fully licensed in one state might not meet the requirements for full licensure in another state.

In most states, legislators and the state board of education determine licensing requirements; some states set requirements through a professional standards board. Regardless of the source of authority, the individuals charged with determining licensure requirements must balance the need to ensure the system produces quality teachers equipped for success in their classrooms with the need to ensure the system produces enough teachers to fill staffing vacancies.<sup>2</sup>

Because there is no clear consensus on what it takes to recruit and prepare a teacher who will be effective in the classroom, and because states have established differing standards and priorities for their teacher workforce, the route to licensure varies significantly from one state to the next. Teachers considered fully licensed in one state might not meet the requirements for full licensure in another state. The differing requirements become especially apparent to teachers attempting to cross state lines, who must often submit

State-specific licensure systems were designed to promote workforce quality; however, they can also limit cross-state mobility, contribute to attrition and exacerbate shortages.

Teacher license reciprocity allows candidates who hold an out-of-state license to earn a license in a new state, subject to meeting state-specific requirements.

Explore all state policies affecting out-of-state license transfers in an online, [searchable database](#).



their transcripts for review and take additional coursework and/or assessments prior to receiving a full teaching license in a receiving state. Additional requirements for teachers transferring from one state to another serve as barriers to entry, slowing the application process down and sometimes dissuading candidates from continuing in their teaching profession.

## How Do State-Specific Licensing Requirements Impact the Teacher Labor Market?

National data suggests that teachers are mobile. Though in-state mobility is more common than cross-state mobility, the most recent available teacher mobility data indicates that more than 25 percent of applications for teaching jobs across the country come from out-of-state candidates.<sup>3</sup> Further, data from 2013-14 indicates that some states, such as **Alaska, North Dakota** and **Wyoming**, rely heavily on out-of-state candidates, granting the majority of their initial teacher licenses to candidates prepared in another state.<sup>4</sup>

However, cross-state mobility rates across the country are not as high as they could be. Research suggests that while state-specific licensing requirements might help promote workforce quality, such requirements might also limit cross-state mobility, contribute to attrition and exacerbate shortages.

**Promoting teacher workforce quality.** State-specific licensing requirements help ensure in-state and out-of-state teachers are prepared for success in the classroom. One study conducted in **North Carolina** found that out-of-state teachers with less than five years of teaching experience were, on average, less effective and had higher turnover rates than in-state

prepared teachers with the same experience. The authors found differences in the quality of candidates across states, with some states exporting mostly ineffective teachers with high turnover rates, and other states exporting mostly effective teachers with low turnover rates.<sup>5</sup> State-specific licensing requirements may help deter some ill-equipped teachers — trained in another state — from entering the classroom, or provide them with the additional training they need to succeed.

- **Limiting cross-state teacher mobility.** State-specific licensing requirements discourage some teachers from crossing state lines. One study of teacher labor markets in **Oregon** and **Washington** found that teachers near the states' borders were between seven and 19 times more likely to move to a district within the state than to a district across the border. These teachers were also three times more likely to move 75 miles or more within their state than to cross nearby state borders.<sup>6</sup>
- **Contributing to teacher attrition.** State-specific licensing requirements discourage some experienced teachers from re-applying for licensure after crossing state lines. According to a recent national survey of teachers who left the profession and would consider returning, 41 percent cited the ability to seamlessly transfer their licenses from one state to the next as an important factor in their decision to return to the classroom.<sup>7</sup>
- **Exacerbating teacher shortages.** State-specific licensing requirements prevent the fluid movement of teachers from areas where they are not needed to areas where they are.<sup>8</sup> Some states experience teacher shortages in subject areas for which other states produced more candidates than they can hire. Reducing barriers for out-of-state teachers, subject to some safeguards, could help these states fill longstanding vacancies with qualified teacher candidates.<sup>9</sup>



## What Is Teacher License Reciprocity?

Teacher license reciprocity allows candidates who hold an out-of-state license to earn a license in a new state, subject to meeting state-specific requirements.<sup>10</sup> Reciprocity agreements allow states to work through variations in licensing systems to coordinate license transfers and fill vacant teaching positions with qualified candidates. Under the most common form of license reciprocity, a fully-licensed out-of-state teacher receives a temporary or initial license to teach and is given time to complete pending license obligations. If the obligations are met prior to the expiration of the temporary license, the teacher receives a full standard license. Only a few states offer full teacher license reciprocity for all eligible, fully-licensed teachers. In these states, fully-licensed out-of-state teachers, regardless of experience, are immediately eligible to receive a standard teaching license and are subject to few or no additional requirements.

Most states also have policies in place to support license transfers for certain candidates. For example, states commonly exempt candidates with at least one to five years of classroom experience and candidates with advanced teaching credentials from additional coursework and/or assessment requirements, sometimes instead requiring these candidates demonstrate evidence of effectiveness through performance evaluations or recommendations for hire. Also, states commonly offer supports for spouses of military personnel who move due to relocation orders, often expediting their licensure application process, waiving licensure fees or granting temporary licenses.

## National Efforts to Facilitate Reciprocity

There has been some movement from the federal government in recent years to facilitate teacher license reciprocity across state lines. The Every Student Succeeds

Act of 2015 allows states to use federal Title II, Part A dollars to create an interstate system of reciprocity.<sup>11</sup> In addition, the Interstate Mobility Act of 2016 would have established a voluntary teaching application program for states, allowing a teacher in a participating state to obtain a position in another participating state without needing to complete additional requirements.<sup>12</sup> The bill did not gain traction in Congress, but will likely be re-introduced.

Meanwhile, several national organizations are supporting states in their efforts to improve teacher license reciprocity:

- The [National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification](#) (NASDTEC) facilitates license reciprocity for member states that signed the NASDTEC Interstate Agreement. The NASDTEC Interstate Agreement is a collection of individual agreements by member states pledging to “issue some form of authorization allowing an inbound certificate holder to legally teach or provide service in the receiving state, provided the license issued by the ‘sending’ state is acceptable under the agreement.”<sup>13</sup> NASDTEC does not guarantee full teacher license reciprocity for member states, but does help clarify which licenses will transfer and what additional requirements must be met. Forty-six states plus D.C. have signed the NASDTEC Interstate Agreement.
- The [National Board for Professional Teaching Standards](#) offers National Board Certification in 25 pre-K through 12th grade certificate areas. The board established a rigorous certification process, requiring teachers demonstrate expertise in five core standards through a series of performance-based, peer-reviewed assessments. National Board Certified teachers can more easily transfer their credentials from one state to the next, and are oftentimes granted advanced credentials without needing to meet additional assessment or coursework requirements.
- The [Interstate Teacher Assessment and Support Consortium](#) supported the creation of the Model Core Teaching Standards, defining what a teacher should know and be able to do. The standards are now widely



accepted in whole — or adapted in part — across the country and could serve as a common foundation for aligning varying state licensure coursework and assessment requirements.

## State Efforts to Facilitate Reciprocity

Since 2016, at least 11 states enacted laws and approved regulations to facilitate reciprocity. For example, both **Arizona** and **Nevada** became full teacher license reciprocity states by passing bills removing multiple barriers to licensure.<sup>14</sup> **Oklahoma** passed a bill waiving assessment requirements for out-of-state candidates and granting them an initial license in a corresponding grade and subject area. After a full year of successful employment in an Oklahoma school district, college or university, out-of-state candidates are eligible for a full standard license.<sup>15</sup> **Delaware** passed a bill waiving the performance assessment requirement for out-of-state candidates with one or more years of teaching experience.<sup>16</sup>

Since military families tend to be especially mobile, a few states offer additional flexibility to teachers who are military spouses. This year, **Indiana** passed a bill requiring that teacher licensure applications by military spouses be expedited, and **West Virginia** passed a bill providing for a temporary, one-year, renewable license for military spouses.<sup>17</sup>

The 50-state table below provides a snapshot of the state policies affecting out-of-state license transfers, current through August 2017. See the complete results from this review in an online, [searchable database](#). According to our review:

**Most states allow candidates qualifying for reciprocity to teach under an initial license while completing additional requirements for full standard licensure.** For example, teachers transferring to Alaska may qualify for an initial license, valid for one to three years, while completing remaining coursework and assessment requirements.<sup>18</sup>

**Only six states provide full teacher licensure reciprocity by statute for out-of-state teachers,** immediately granting eligible candidates a standard teaching license and subjecting them to few or no additional requirements. For example, **Florida** grants teacher candidates a standard license if they can provide documentation of a valid out-of-state license. Candidates are not subject to any additional coursework, assessment or experience requirements.<sup>19</sup> Many more states provide full reciprocity to experienced candidates, candidates with advanced credentials or candidates who obtained National Board Certification.

**Thirty-one states require that some or all out-of-state teacher candidates take additional coursework or training** prior to entering a classroom, or within a certain number of years of teaching. Of these states, 10 provide a test-out or other exemption option for coursework requirements. For example, Wyoming requires out-of-state candidates demonstrate knowledge of the United States and Wyoming Constitutions by meeting coursework requirements or by passing an approved examination.<sup>20</sup>

**Forty-three states plus D.C. require that some or all out-of-state teacher candidates take additional assessments** prior to entering a classroom, or within a certain number of years of teaching. For example, Oregon requires out-of-state candidates receive a passing score on the state-approved subject matter tests (or qualify for an assessment exemption) and pass an exam on “protecting student and civil rights” prior to obtaining a standard license.<sup>21</sup>

**Thirty-five states plus D.C. have different requirements for experienced and inexperienced teachers,** limiting licensure barriers for candidates meeting established experience requirements. For example, out-of-state candidates for licensure in North Dakota can submit evidence of contracted teaching experience in place of pedagogical assessment requirements.<sup>22</sup>



- **Fourteen states plus D.C. require candidates with classroom experience provide evidence of effectiveness** in past performance, oftentimes limiting barriers for candidates who can demonstrate success. For example, out-of-state teachers seeking licensure in **Colorado** are eligible for a full, standard license and exempt from additional assessment requirements if they completed at least three years of “continuous, successful, evaluated experience as a licensed teacher in an elementary or secondary school.”<sup>23</sup>
- **Twenty-four states plus D.C. provide special licensure reciprocity for out-of-state teachers with advanced credentials,** exempting these candidates from

additional coursework or assessment requirements and oftentimes immediately granting them a standard or advanced license. For example, **Hawaii** grants an advanced license to out-of-state candidates with at least five years of satisfactory full-time teaching experience within the last eight years and who hold an advanced degree.<sup>24</sup>

- **Twenty-seven states provide special licensure reciprocity or supports for military spouses.** For example, **Iowa** offers a military exchange license, and gives military spouses three years to complete any remaining coursework or assessment requirements.<sup>25</sup>



# Teacher License Reciprocity at a Glance

● YES   ● YES, THOUGH NOT FOR ALL CANDIDATES

● YES, THOUGH NOT IMMEDIATELY   ● YES, THOUGH NOT FOR ALL CANDIDATES AND NOT IMMEDIATELY

|                      | NASDTEC Interstate Agreement | Full Reciprocity by Statute | Coursework Requirements | Test-out or Exemption | Assessment Requirements | Different Requirements Based on Experience | Evidence of Effectiveness | Special Reciprocity: Advanced Credentials | Special Reciprocity or Supports: Military Spouses |
|----------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|---------------------------|---|---|
| Alabama              | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       | ●  |                           | ●   |   |
| Alaska               | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           |   |   |
| Arizona              | ●                            | ●                           | ●                       | ●                     |                         |  |                           |   | N/A   |
| Arkansas             | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           |   | ●   |
| California           | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  | ●                         |   |   |
| Colorado             | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       | ●  | ●                         | ●   | ●   |
| Connecticut          | ●                            |                             | ●                       | ●                     | ●                       | ●  | ●                         | ●   |   |
| Delaware             | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       | ●  |                           | ●   |   |
| District of Columbia | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       | ●  | ●                         | ●   |   |
| Florida              | ●                            | ●                           |                         | N/A                   |                         |  |                           |   | ●   |
| Georgia              | ●                            |                             | ●                       | ●                     | ●                       | ●  | ●                         | ●   |   |
| Hawaii               | ●                            | ●                           |                         | N/A                   |                         | ●  | ●                         | ●   | ●   |
| Idaho                | ●                            |                             | ●                       | ●                     | ●                       |  |                           |   | ●   |
| Illinois             | ●                            |                             | ●                       | ●                     | ●                       | ●  |                           |   | ●   |
| Indiana              | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           |   | ●   |
| Iowa                 | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           | ●   | ●   |
| Kansas               | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       | ●  |                           |   | ●   |
| Kentucky             | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           | ●   | ●   |
| Louisiana            | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           |   | ●   |
| Maine                | ●                            |                             | ●                       | ●                     | ●                       |  |                           |   |   |
| Maryland             | ●                            |                             | ●                       | ●                     | ●                       | ●  | ●                         |   | ●   |
| Massachusetts        | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       |  |                           |   | ●   |
| Michigan             | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       | ●  |                           | ●   | ●   |
| Minnesota            | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           |   | ●   |
| Mississippi          | ●                            | ●                           |                         | N/A                   |                         |  |                           | ●   | ●   |
| Missouri             | ●                            | ●                           |                         | N/A                   |                         |  |                           | ●   | ●   |
| Montana              | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  | ●                         |   |   |
| Nebraska             | ●                            |                             | ●                       | ●                     | ●                       | ●  |                           |   |   |
| Nevada               | ●                            | ●                           | ●                       |                       |                         |  |                           | ●   | ●   |
| New Hampshire        | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       | ●  | ●                         | ●   |   |
| New Jersey           | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       |  | ●                         | ●   | ●   |
| New Mexico           |                              |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       | ●  | ●                         | ●   |   |



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|                | NASDTEC Interstate Agreement | Full Reciprocity by Statute | Coursework Requirements | Test-out or Exemption | Assessment Requirements | Different Requirements Based on Experience | Evidence of Effectiveness | Special Reciprocity: Advanced Credentials | Special Reciprocity or Supports: Military Spouses |
|----------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------|--|---------------------------|---|---|
| New York       |                              |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  | ●                         |   |   |
| North Carolina | ●                            |                             | ●                       | ●                     | ●                       |  | ●                         |   | ●   |
| North Dakota   | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           |   |   |
| Ohio           | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           | ●   | ●   |
| Oklahoma       | ●                            | *                           |                         | N/A                   |                         |  |                           |   |   |
| Oregon         | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       | ●  |                           | ●   | ●   |
| Pennsylvania   | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  | ●                         | ●   | ●   |
| Rhode Island   | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       |  |                           |   |   |
| South Carolina | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       | ●  |                           | ●   | ●   |
| South Dakota   |                              |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           |   | ●   |
| Tennessee      | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       |  |                           |   |   |
| Texas          | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       |  |                           | N/A                                       | ●   |
| Utah           | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           | ●   |   |
| Vermont        | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       |  |                           | ●   |   |
| Virginia       | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           | ●   |   |
| Washington     | ●                            |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           |   | ●   |
| West Virginia  | ●                            |                             |                         | N/A                   | ●                       | ●  |                           | ●   | ●   |
| Wisconsin      |                              |                             | ●                       |                       | ●                       | ●  |                           | N/A                                       |   |
| Wyoming        | ●                            |                             | ●                       | ●                     | ●                       | ●  |                           | N/A                                       | ●   |
| Yes            | 47                           | 6                           | 31                      | 10                    | 44                      | 36   | 15                        | 25  | 27  |
| No             | 4                            | 45                          | 20                      | 21                    | 7                       | 15   | 36                        | 22  | 24  |
| N/A            | 0                            | 0                           | 0                       | 20                    | 0                       | 0  | 0                         | 4   | 0   |

\*Oklahoma is not considered a full reciprocity state because candidates accepted under reciprocity receive an initial license in a corresponding grade and subject area. However, after a full year of successful employment in an Oklahoma school district, college or university, out-of-state candidates are eligible for a full standard license.

The above table summarizes state policies for teacher license reciprocity identified in statute, administrative code and state education agency websites for all 50 states plus D.C. See complete results from this review in an online, [searchable database](#). Users can explore the data in multiple ways, including: color-coded mapping, state-level profiles for all policy areas and a comparison of all states across each data point.



|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>NASDTEC Interstate Agreement</b>                      | The state signed onto an interstate or regional reciprocity agreement, most commonly the NASDTEC Interstate Agreement.  |
| <b>Full Reciprocity by Statute</b>                       | The state has full reciprocity by statute for out-of-state teachers, immediately granting eligible candidates a standard teaching license and subjecting them to few or no additional requirements.                     |
| <b>Coursework Requirements</b>                           | The state has coursework requirements in place for out-of-state teachers. Some or all candidates must take additional coursework prior to entering — or within a certain number of years of teaching in — a classroom.  |
| <b>Test-out or Exemption</b>                             | The state provides a test-out or other exemption option for additional coursework requirements.   |
| <b>Assessment Requirements</b>                           | The state has assessment requirements in place for out-of-state teachers. Some or all candidates must take additional assessments prior to entering — or within a certain number of years of teaching in — a classroom. |
| <b>Different Requirements Based on Experience</b>        | The state has different requirements in place for experienced and inexperienced out-of-state teachers.  |
| <b>Evidence of Effectiveness</b>                         | The state requires out-of-state teachers with experience provide evidence of effectiveness in past performance.   |
| <b>Special Reciprocity: Advanced credentials</b>         | The state provides special licensure portability for out-of-state teachers with advanced licensure credentials. This does not include special licensure mobility for teachers with National Board Certification.        |
| <b>Special Reciprocity or Supports: Military spouses</b> | The state provides special licensure portability or supports for military spouses.  |



## ENDNOTES

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15. Oklahoma House Bill 2946, 2016.
16. Delaware House Bill 143-1, 2017.
17. Indiana House Bill 1396, 2017; West Virginia House Bill 2771, 2017.



18. Alaska Stat. Ann. § 14-20-015; Alaska Stat. Ann. § 14-20-020; Alaska Admin. Code tit. 4, § 12.305; Alaska Admin. Code tit. 4, § 12.310
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